

LETTER
TO A
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT,
CONTAINING A
PROPOSAL
FOR
Bringing in a BILL to Revise, Amend or
Repeal certain
OBSOLETE STATUTES,

Commonly called

The Ten Commandments.

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L O N D O N:

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A
LETTER
TO A
Member of Parliament, &c.

SIR,



HE Friendship with which you honour me, and the ardent Zeal you have always exerted in the Cause of Liberty, in opposition to Priestcraft and Superstition, have determined me to lay before you my impartial Thoughts upon a Subject which has more than once been started in the course of our Conversation. How often have I heard you wish that the absurd Restraints that are made use of by cunning and designing Men to limit the freedom of our Actions, as well as our Faith and Judgment in religious Matters, were entirely re-

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mov'd; that all our *Creeds, Articles of Faith, moral Precepts, and religious Institutions,* were fairly and impartially examin'd by Men of free and unprejudic'd Understandings, and we were restor'd to that unbounded Liberty of acting as well as thinking, which Nature, Reason, and common Sense, assure us to be the undoubted Birthright and natural Privilege of all *Free Agents!*

THIS Liberty of thinking and judging in opposition to *all C R E E D S and Creed-makers,* has been so successfully practised and defended of late Years, that I think it is now become almost an universal Principle, that every Man's natural Reason and good Sense is and ought to be the sole Rule, Measure and Standard of his Faith, because no Man can reasonably be supposed to believe what he does not understand; so that by necessary consequence he that has but little Knowledge can have but little Faith, and he that understands nothing at all, can believe nothing at all.—

SO far is right, but not sufficient; this is leaving off in the middle, and doing a good thing

thing but by halves : if we are only at liberty to think, and not to act, our Liberty is incomplet, we are still in a degree of Bondage. That our Will is absolutely free, is agreed on all hands, but to what purpose ? What are we the better for that Freedom ? If whilst we are allowed the Liberty of Thought and Will, we are still debarred the Liberty of Action ? If the sober Dictates of Nature, Reason, and good Sense, are sufficient to regulate our Thoughts, why not our Actions too ? —

THIS then is the Point I am endeavouring to clear ; and to shew that the latter is quite as reasonable, if not more so, than the former. In order to set this matter in the truest Light, I shall not meddle with those general Principles which have been so admirably stated and defended by the late Dr. Tindal, Dr. M——d——lle, and other ingenious Writers, as being of so abstracted and delicate a Nature, that they require more Genius and Application to apprehend and pursue them through their natural Consequences than can be expected from common Readers. My Busines shall be to en-

ter into a more particular Examination of that *summary Rule* of our moral and religious Conduct, commonly called *The Ten Commandments*; which in their most extended Sense are generally supposed to be of moral (nay some say of natural) Obligation to all Christian People, even in reformed Protestant Countries; which is a Point that well deserves our attentive Consideration.

THAT these Commandments were originally given to the Jews, is beyond all dispute, and as their great Lawgiver himself declar'd, and their whole History confirms, that they were a *stiffnecked, perverse Generation*; so it is more than probable that these Commandments were solely intended to correct the Misunderstandings, restrain the Excesses, and regulate the Conduct of that *stubborn, wrong-headed People*, who had not Reason, nor Learning, nor Politeness enough to regulate their own moral Behaviour; but are no more binding to a *sensible, learned, just, righteous, polite, free-thinking People*, than the Laws concerning Circumcision and Sacrifices. And as the happy Inhabitants of these reformed Nations have long ago got rid

rid of all the superstitious Impositions of Christian Priestcraft, it is a Shame and Re- proach to them to be still in bondage to Jewish Ordinances, especially if it can be made appear that they are an intolerable Imposition upon a free People, without having the least moral or natural Aptitude to pro- mote the Welfare of Civil Society, and the temporal Good and Benefit of Mankind, which are now generally acknowledged to be the great End and Foundation of all civil, moral and religious Institution.

THE first of these Commandments (I presume my Readers can remember it, with- out having it repeated) is an arbitrary Imposi- tion upon the *Reason* and Liberty of Man- kind. Every Man's Belief and Practice ne- cessarily follows the kind and degree of Evi- dence he has for either; now if a Man sees no more Evidence for one, than he does for five hundred, it is quite indifferent to him whether he have five hundred, or one, or none at all.

THE *second*, depending on the *first*, is but an Absurdity improved; and if the first be

a meer matter of Indifference, the second must be much more so, and by consequence impertinent and unnecessary.

THE Third, however vulgarly misunderstood, is capable of a rational and useful Meaning. It is generally supposed to forbid using the *Divine Name* without a superstitious Reverence, such as the Jews are known to pay to the Tetragrammaton, which plainly shews that this Prohibition was intended principally if not entirely for them, which to us Christians appears highly absurd and unreasonable. For it is a certain and infallible Rule laid down by the celebrated Author of the plain Account of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper *, That no other Meaning or Interpretation is to be put upon the Words of Scripture, but what is agreeable to the common Rules of speaking upon the like Occasions. Now, let any Man that understands the Propriety of the English Language judge what is the plain and obvious Sense of saying or doing any thing *in vain*; it can only mean the doing a thing to no purpose or to no advantage.

* Preface vi.

Thus,

Thus, we say; when a Man talks a whole Hour by the Clock, and makes nothing of it, and gets nothing by it, that he stretches his Lungs and spends his Breath *in vain*. If a Man were to take a long Voyage, and return without any Gain or Advantage to himself, he may be justly said to have travelled so far, and laboured so much *in vain*. This is too plain to need any further Proof or Explanation, and gives us a rational and useful Sense of this Commandment, *i.e.* that we should never make use of that *Holy Name*, but to answer some Purpose, to serve some End, or procure some Advantage, such as the qualifying ourselves for a good Employment, supplanting a Rival, abusing a suspicious Friend, or ruining a professed Enemy, by solemn Declarations, which we neither believe nor intend to perform, or any such like Case, which may possibly happen in the Course and Business of Life.

THE *Fourth* is miserably perverted from its original Design, being generally supposed to be of universal Obligation to all Jews and Christians to keep holy one day in seven. Whereas it appears at first sight to be only a poli-

political, good-natur'd Contrivance in favour of the laborious Part of Mankind. People of Quality and Fashion have no concern in it: It was only intended for the *Canaille*, for the Scrubbs and Drudges of Mankind, as appears from the very Letter of the Commandment: *Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do; but the seventh day, &c.* You see plainly the Command is directed only to those that labour six days in the Week; for them only is the seventh day appointed to be kept holy, or a day of rest from their Labours, which is determined beyond all Contradiction by these Words, *and do all that thou hast to do*, which plainly restrain it to those only that have *something to do*; they therefore that have *nothing at all to do*, are no ways concern'd in the Commandment. The case is plainly this: They who are oblig'd to labour six days in the Week, and on each of these days have *something to do*, are indulged by this Commandment in having the seventh day allowed them for a day of rest. They therefore whose easy Circumstances exempt them from the necessity of any kind of Labour, so much as one Day in the Year, who have nothing at

at all to do but to eat, drink, and sleep, and divert themselves, cannot fairly and consistently be supposed to have any Concern, or be under any Obligation about it. This appears yet plainer from the common and vulgar Prejudices about the manner of keeping holy this Sabbath-day or day of rest; which is to *go to Church, to say their Prayers, to read the Bible and other religious Books.* But this would be so far from making it a day of Rest and Refreshment to many People of Rank and Quality, that it would rather be the severest Penance you could impose upon them. How barbarous and unreason-able would it be to expect to see People of Fashion and Distinction take as much Pains in dressing to appear at Church among a set of miserable Sinners, as in the best Company at the Drawing-Room or the Opera; and all this only to be told of their Faults, and put in mind of their Duty? What an Im-position would it be upon People of Figure and Pleasure to be set to con over a Set of old-fashioned Prayers which they had learnt in the Nursery, and never thought of since, or to sit spelling over the Bible or a Book of Devotion for an Hour together, which they

could better employ at Hazard, Backgammon, or Quadrille, or in a Party of Gallantry and Pleasure. But to put this Matter beyond all doubt. It is plain that this Commandment was intended only for the labouring Part of Mankind, because you find that the Cattle are included in the Indulgence, as well as their Owners or Drivers ; for if the Beasts of the Earth did not rest, how should the Beasts of the People ? As the People were commanded to rest, it was necessary the Cattle should do so too. If the Horses must be put to for a Sunday's Journey, *John* must get up and drive, unless *his Honour* or *his Worship* will be so humble and so good-natur'd as to drive himself one Day in the Week, and let the Servants go to Church. But after all, there is nothing more enjoined or implied in this Commandment than what common Sense and Necessity could teach us ; for neither Cattle nor Servants can work always, they must of necessity have some rest ; and therefore there seems to have been but little Occasion for a Commandment from Heaven in an Affair where common Sense is a sufficient Guide. Upon the whole, these four first Commandments

ments seem to be of very little consequence to Mankind for the Conduct of Men of Sense, and Taste ever was and ever will be the same, as if these Commandments had been never given.

THE Fifth Commandment seems as unnecessary as the other four, and was plainly calculated for the Jews, to serve some political Purposes, as appears plainly from the Promise of length of Days, or long Enjoyment of their new Possessions. Whereas among us it is generally a rule, that Children of course will honour their Parents, if they think they deserve it ; that is, if they provide for them according to their State and Condition, if they indulge and gratify all their just and reasonable Desires and Inclinations, if they lay no Restraints upon them, nor tease their tender Ears with disagreeable Lectures about Religion, Temperance, Sobriety and Chastity, such Parents will be sure to be honoured by such Children ; but those that act otherwise are not like to receive much Honour from their Children in this polite, well-bred Generation, tho'

there were ten thousand Commandments to enjoin it.

THE Five last Commandments lie under a general Prejudice, upon a Suspicion of Corruption and Interpolation. It has been suspected by some very sagacious Criticks, that the negative Particle (*not*) has by Negligence or Design been inserted into each of them, tho' no direct Proof has been yet made of the Fraud. The first hint that was publickly given of this Kind was in an accidental Conversation betwixt the Devil and the late Dr. *Tindal*, as the Story is merrily told by the Author of the Apparition. And a devilish unlucky Discovery it would prove, if the thing could be fairly made out, and the Interpolation directly proved. Tho' to say the truth, the Suspicion seems to have been much ancienter than the aforesaid Conversation ; for we are told, that in the Reign of King *Charles* the First, some bold Printer had the Courage to leave out the suspicious Particle only in one of the Commandments, to feel the Pulse of the People, and see whether they were ripe for further Discoveries, and a thorough Reformation ;

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and that accordingly in a new Edition of the Liturgy, the seventh Commandment was printed thus, *Thou shalt commit Adultery.* But as the poor Devil happened to live in evil Days of Bigotry and Superstition, under a grave formal Prince, and an old, sour, morose Archbishop, who had no more taste of Gallantry than Criticism, he was severely swindged, and the whole Impression called in, to the great Discouragement of all Attempts of that kind for the future. Tho' many of the polite clever People seemed so well satisfy'd with the new reading, that they thought it an excellent Emendation, and directed their Conduct accordingly. And I cannot but hope that considering the great Encouragement that is now publickly given for free Debate and Enquiry into these and such-like superstitious Frauds, we shall soon see this dark Affair set in a true Light, and perhaps it may be thought worth while to give publick Encouragement to the Learned to bend their Thoughts this way, by proposing a competent Reward to any that shall be able to make and publish a full Discovery of this Corruption and Interpolation, as it would contribute to the quieting of many Consciences,

Consciences, and promoting and establishing an unbounded Liberty in Thought, Word and Deed. However, till such Discovery can be made, let us suppose the present Reading to be genuine, and then consider them in their natural Meaning, without those unreasonable Interpretations which Prejudice and Custom seem to have fixed upon them.

THE *Sixth Commandment* could never be intended as an absolute Prohibition not to take away the Life of another, it only forbids that clumsy, butcherly way of murdering, made use of by the vilest and meanest part of Mankind; whereas People of rank and distinction, who kill in an honourable Gentleman-like way, are no ways concerned in this Commandment or affected by it. This is so agreeable to the natural Sense of Mankind, that the very same Action shall be criminal in one Man, and not in another. If one Scoundrel happen to kill another, it is truly and properly called Murder; but if a Man of Rank and Figure happen to kill a Domestick or Inferiour with or without Provocation, or even an Equal in an honourable

nourable way, it alters both the Name and Nature of the Crime, and becomes no more than Man-slaughter: and the Gentlemen of the Sword, who happen to kill their Man in a genteel way, are no more guilty of Murder, than an honest peaceable Citizen, that kills a Fly or a Spider, or swallows an Oyster alive.

THE *Seventh Commandment* is most certainly to be understood with the same Restrictions and Limitations as the Sixth, and could only be meant to restrain little People within such Bounds as are absolutely necessary for their Rank and Station in Life. For if Tradesmen, Artificers and Labourers should take it in their heads to turn fine Gentlemen, and pretend to mimick their Betters, should they neglect the Care of their Shops and Employments in quest of Gallantries, it must end in an absolute decay of Trade, neglect of Busines, and the ruin of many poor Families, and bring an unsupportable Burden upon the Publick. Besides, as Affairs of this kind are not to be transacted without very great Expence, Address and Application, it cannot be supposed that People

ple of mean Birth, low Education, and small Fortunes, can ever manage them in so polite and genteel a way as to avoid Discovery and Scandal, or carry it off with that intrepid Assurance as is absolutely necessary for People in such delicate Circumstances. But then this cannot be supposed to affect People of superior Fortune and Quality, who have so much Time and Money upon their hands, that they scarce know how to employ it otherwise. Now if a Man of Quality should condescend so low as to bestow the Exuberancy of his Blood and Fortune in relieving the Necessities of some pretty Neighbour, should he bestow a dash of this noble Blood upon a deserving Plebeian Family, and pay well into the bargain, it ought to be considered as an Honour as well as an Advantage to the aforesaid Family, and as a way of mending the Blood and Fortune, if not the Morals, of the next Generation. And as People of Rank and Condition are exempt from the Obligation of this Precept, so by an Argument *& fortiori*, are Legislators and Governours of every sort and kind, who are presumed of course to be the best Judges of the Duty and Necessity

cessity of their Subjects, and are accountable to nobody but themselves.

THE *Eighth Commandment* is certainly to be understood with the same Restrictions and Limitations, which is directly implied in the very Letter of the Precept, *Thou shalt not steal.* Stealing we all know is the most pitiful, scoundrel Act of Injustice, it implies a mean, sneaking, cowardly way of defrauding one's Neighbour. Every Sessions-Paper shows you with what Contempt and Detestation those poor Dogs are treated for stealing three Silver Spoons, the Property of *G. W.* Innholder, value one Pound ten Shillings; a pair of Breeches and two Shirts, the Property of *L. C.* Labourer, value six Shillings; four Sheep, the Property of *M. C.* Esq; value three Pounds sixteen Shillings; not to mention the Hero's of this Class, the Horse-stealers, who are tuck'd up every A-fizes without Mercy or Pity. But this can by no means be thought to extend to the numberless Arts and Branches of Industry and Policy, by which People of Rank and Distinction increase their Fortunes, and support their State and Figure in the World;

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this would be an effectual way of cutting all the Nerves of Industry at one stroke, a fatal check to all the Mysteries of Trade and Commerce, and an absolute Discouragement to all sorts of Jobbers, Gamesters, Fortune-hunters, and Jockeys, who are the Directors and Managers of all our Parties of Business and Diversion, and would be an insufferable Reflection upon the Memory of some of the greatest Men in all Ages, whose Names are transmitted to Posterity under the glorious Titles of illustrious Conquerors, able Ministers, cunning Statesmen, and consummate Politicians.

THE *Ninth Commandment* I think as little liable to Exception as any of them ; but yet I cannot think it amiss if it were a little qualify'd by two or three Exceptions in favour of publick Ministers, Courts of Justice, and Tea-Tables. There are many weighty and political Reasons for indulging publick Ministers in certain Deviations from Truth, which however criminal they may appear in private Persons, are in those publick Stations expedient and necessary. Sir *Harry Wotton*, who was himself a foreign Ambassador, has long

long ago declared, that *lying dextrously and cunningly, and with a good Intention, is the chief Business of such Ministers.* And therefore has given us the Definition of an Ambassador in these Terms, *Legatus est vir bonus, peregrē missus ad mentiendum Reipublicæ causā.* i. e. *An Ambassador is an honest Man, sent to lye abroad for the good of his Country.* And whatever Reasons can be offered in vindication of Ambassadors for *lying abroad,* may with equal Justice be pleaded for those Ministers who are *lying at home for the good of their Country.*—

SO also the tedious Delays of Justice, especially in Chancery-suits, are so notorious to the whole Nation, that it has often been found, that by the long Continuance of the Suit, he that gets a Decree in his Favour, is often undone before he can obtain it. Now where would be the hurt, if some good-natur'd Person in mere Compassion to both the Suitors, shoud by an officious Falshood determine the Issue of the Cause, and shorten the Suit to the manifest Advantage of them both? Never tell me that the Action is in itself unjust and sinful. I deny it.

The Action is not *malum in se*; any more than giving a *Coup de grace* to a dying Criminal, which puts him out of his Pain, And tho' the giving such a mortal Stroke to a innocent uncondemned Person would be highly cruel, barbarous and wicked, yet it is an Act of Mercy and Charity to the expiring Malefactor.

AND as to our Tea-Tables, it is well known that *Scandal*, which is one Species of false Witness, is the Life of those little polite Assemblies; and if they were confin'd to utter nothing but strict Truth, there would be an End of all Conversation, and the prettiest Orators in the Circle would grow as dull as a Watch-Light, and as insipid as an old Almanack; and after all, where is the hurt of making an ingenious Story, or embroidering and embellishing a real Fact, where the Design is only to direct and instruct the Company? *Inventors of Fables* have always been ranked among the wise Men and Philosophers of antient Times, nor has it ever been objected to any of the wise Antients or Moderns, that they have made Beasts and Birds, Trees and Flowers,

Flowers, talk like Men of Sense, for the Correction and Instruction of their Better.

THE Tenth Commandment, after al that has been said about the rest, seems perfectly needless and superfluous, and commands direct Impossibilities. For show me the Man that is tied for Life to an ill-natur'd, sour, proud, disagreeable Rib, who would not wish to make an exchange for the cheerful, good-natur'd, agreeable Spouse of his Neighbour? Who would not wish to change his own old, inconvenient, ruinous House for a new and convenient one of his Neighbour's? So that a Prohibition of this kind is a direct Contradiction to the very Law and Light of Nature, which must in all cases be consulted and obey'd as the infallible Rule of our moral and religious Conduct.

THE Premises tenderly considered, we cannot but hope that care will be taken so to explain, amend or repeal these obsolete Statutes, that they may no longer give Offence to People of Rank, Distinction and Figure, in pursuit of their Interest or Pleasures.

sures. But if it shall be thought fit by the Wisdom of our Superiors to continue them still in force, it may be with such Restrictions and Limitations, as not to extend to any but the low uneducated Part of Mankind, who have neither Sense, nor Reason, nor Politeness enough to govern and conduct themselves. And if I may be allowed the further Liberty of giving my Opinion and Advice in the present Case, I beg leave to propose certain Heads of a Bill to be offered to the House upon a proper Occasion, as follows:

THAT whereas a certain immemorial, superstitious Practice has prevailed in these Nations, for certain old Women of both Sexes, such as Grandmothers, Nurses, Maiden Aunts, School-dames, and Parsons, to teach and instruct the Children even of Protestant Parents in certain ancient Jewish Laws, commonly called *The Ten Commandments*; which said superstitious Practice, notwithstanding the many Attempts which

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from time to time have been made by certain judicious and well-meaning Persons towards a thorough Reformation, still subsists among us, in defiance of all the natural and religious Rights and Privileges of a free Protestant People : it has been long thought by all true Lovers of Liberty, to be almost an insupportable Burden, who therefore wish and hope to be relieved from it by a proper Authority. But whereas the said Jewish Laws and Precepts have been by the Ignorance and Superstition of our Forefathers unhappily incorporated in the Laws of our Country, and made a part of our legal Constitution, and cannot without the appearance of Difficulty and Danger be entirely repealed ; it is therefore thought proper so to limit and explain their Meaning and Obligation, as in a great measure to prevent the several Hardships and Inconveniences arising from the mistaken Notions and Prejudices about them. And whereas it is now universally agreed and confessed, that the good of Society,

ciety, and the civil Interests of Mankind, are the sole Foundation, Rule and Measure of all religious Institutions, and that nothing ought to be deemed to be of religious Obligation, but so far as it contributes to that important End. And whereas it appears from the concurrent Testimony of all Ages, that there have been great Princes, mighty Conquerours, able Ministers, cunning Politicians, gallant Commanders, eminent Lawyers, wise Magistrates, skilful Physicians, and eloquent Preachers, who had either never received or utterly renounced these popular Superstitions, and acted with an apparent Contempt of all Obligations vulgarly supposed to arise from them, we are thence induced to believe that the following Explanation and Limitations of the said Precepts will be of singular Use and Benefit to the Subjects of this Realm, the Ease of tender Consciences, and the natural and religious Liberties of all his Majesty's loving Subjects.

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THE *First Commandment* is a manifest Imposition upon the natural Rights and Liberties of Mankind. It is confessed on all hands, that every true free-born Protestant has a Right to judge freely of all Articles of Religion that shall be proposed for his Belief or Practice, and to determine according to the kind or degree of Evidence that shall be offered him ; but if a Man shall see no more Evidence for one than for five hundred, or none at all, it will be an extreme Hardship to require of him any Belief or Practice, which he upon the best Evidence shall judge unreasonable.

THE *Second* is quite an unnecessary Commandment ; for if a Man sees no Evidence of a Substance, he will be little concern'd about the Shadow : and for a Man of Sense to be sollicitous about the Picture, Image or Statue of a Person *in nubibus*, which he has no Reason to believe ever did

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or could exist *in rerum naturâ*, is a Supposition too gross to be admitted. —

B E it therefore enacted, &c. That from and after the day of next ensuing, no Person or Persons shall presume to declare, affirm, or teach, by Word or Writing, that these two Commandments are in their own nature of universal Obligation to all sorts of People ; but shall freely own, teach and declare, that they are points of mere Speculation, of an indifferent Nature, of which every true Protestant has liberty to judge, pronounce and practise according to the best Light and Evidence that he or she shall have, and no otherwise.

THE *Third Commandment*, however intended for the Good and Benefit of Society, in which the Good and Benefit of every particular Member of the said Society is necessarily included, has been perverted to certain

tain superstitious Uses and Purposes, as if there were an inherent Holiness in the Sound of that *Name*, and the very Letters that compose it; so as that it ought never to be mention'd but on certain solemn and insignificant Occasions, such as Prayers, Benedictions, &c. and with certain Marks and Tokens of Reverence and Devotions, which are no ways expressed or implied in the Letter of the said Commandment, as interpreted by the best Criticks and Commentators. One of these, a celebrated Writer, a great Critick, and an excellent Casuist, has laid down an infallible Rule of Interpretation in his matchless Book called, *A plain Account of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* *, That no other Meaning or Interpretation is to be put upon the Words of Scripture, but such as is agreeable to the common Rules of speaking upon the like Occasions. Now the Expression of saying or doing a thing *in vain*, is so plain

* Preface vi.

and obvious, that no Man even of common Sense can mistake it. It always does, and can signify no more nor no less, than the doing or saying a thing to no Purpose, to no Advantage, to serve no Interest, or procure no Good to the Person that does or says it, or to his Family, Friends and Dependents ; and can never include those who never use that *Name*, but with some direct Prospect of Interest and Advantage to themselves, which (according to the fundamental Rule before laid down) is necessarily included in the Interest of the Publick, and consequently inseparable from it. So then he cannot be said to take that *Name* in vain, who makes use of it by way of Oath, Promise, Affirmation, Negation, Declaration, or Assertion of any sort or kind, as a Qualification or Means of obtaining any honourable or gainful Post, Office, or Employment, ecclesiastical, military, or civil, or who makes use of it to supplant a Rival, amuse a suspicious Friend, or ruin a professed Enemy.—

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Be it therefore enacted, That if there be any Person or Persons so weak and superstitious, as to understand and practice this Commandment according to the vulgar Prejudices, it shall be lawful for him or her to think and act accordingly, without any Let, Hindrance or Molestation from any Person or Persons whatsoever, but that the true and genuine Sense and Meaning of the said Commandment be declared to be as is above fully recited and explained.

THE *Fourth Commandment*, however particularly calculated and intended for the Ease and Benefit of the lower Part of Mankind, has been notoriously perverted and abused, to the great Detriment and Annoyance of several excellent and well-disposed Persons, who have by certain weak and superstitious Prejudices been diverted from attending to the necessary Calls of Business and Pleasure, and suffered themselves to be crowded up for several hours together in the heat

heat of Summer in a greazy Congregation of miserable Sinners, which they could have spent more agreeably with a Set of select Friends in a shady Garden, or a cool Arbour ; and to sit starving and freezing in the midst of Winter, when a good Fire or a warm Bed would have done them quite as much good, and been much more agreeable. Whereas the Letter of the Commandment shews it plainly to be intended only for the Ease and Benefit of the laborious part of Mankind, who are oblig'd to labour six days in the Week, and do all that they have to do ; which plainly shews that they who never labour, and have nothing at all to do, are no way concerned in this Commandment.—

BE it therefore enacted, That from and after the day of no Person or Persons shall presume to teach or declare, either by Word or Writing, that this fourth Commandment is equally and indifferently bind-

binding and obliging to all sorts of Persons, of what Rank or Quality soever, but to such and such only as are herein after specify'd, declared and expressed ; that is to say, all Day-labourers, Farmers and their Servants, Artificers and Tradesmen, who being necessarily oblig'd to attend the Busines of their several Professions six days in the Week, ought to rest from their several Labours on the seventh Day : but that the Obligation does not extend to People of the highest Rank and Condition, nor to any Gentleman who can support the Dignity of his Person and Family without any Labour or Busines whatsoever, so as to make it necessary for him to come to Church, or spend the Day in Prayer and Devotion with their Families at home, except where the Great Man of the Parish happens to be the Impropriator of the Rectory, and enjoys the whole or any Part of the great Tythes ; for it is hereby expressly provided, that every such Impropria-

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tor shall be bound to attend the Service of the Church, with as many of his Family as can be spared, every first Sunday in the Month, as an acknowledgement, that they hold and enjoy the said Tythes by a sort of religious Tenure, as a kind of Ecclesiastical Fee; and that upon default by Non-attendance, the said great Tythes shall immediately revert to the Church, and be annexed to the Vicarage for ever. And whereas it may possibly happen, that certain Ecclesiastical Persons may imagine themselves entitled to the Benefit of this Act, as Persons that are obliged to no sort of Labour, that have no manner or kind of thing to do for the abovesaid six days of the Week, it is hereby expressly provided and declared, That they shall attend at least, if not perform the Service of the Church, every Sunday Morning; unless prevented by any necessary and allowable Impediment, of which themselves shall be the sole Judges. And whereas a further Doubt may hereafter arise, how far

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the Domesticks of noble Families, and others excepted out of this Act, may be affected by it, it is hereby expressly declared, and provided, That the Chaplain (if there be any) and all the other Servants out of Li-very, with my Lady's Woman, and her Gentlewomen Fellow-Servants, are to be considered in a distinct Capacity, being a sort of *mixtæ Personæ*, as People not quite idle, nor quite employed, as People that may be said to have some sort of Labour, tho' not to take much pains, who may be said to have something to do, tho' not a great deal, nor to any great purpose. The Chaplain therefore, if it appears that he performs no Ecclesiastical Office, such as reading Prayers, or saying Grace in the Family, shall be oblig'd to attend the Service of the Parish-Church every Sunday Morning, with as many of the better sort of Servants as can be spared from the Service of the Family; but that the Masters and Heads of these Families, and all other Persons above-men-

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tioned and qualify'd as this Act directs, are and shall be at full liberty to spend that day in travelling, parties of pleasure, smoaking, drinking, gaming, walking or sleeping, as he or she shall think fit, without being accountable to any Person or Persons whatsoever for so doing: which we cannot help thinking to be a just and reasonable Indulgence to People of Rank and Figure, that they may be distinguish'd from their Inferiours, who are designed for nothing higher than the Service of God, and their Superiours.

THE Fifth Commandment seems to be a Precept of a very indifferent nature; for as it is certain that no Children of tolerable Sense or good Manners, would refuse to pay due Honour and Respect to such Parents as shall appear to deserve it; so it is as certain that they neither will nor can do those that do not. Which necessarily implies a Duty in all Parents so to behave towards their Children, as to deserve that Honour from them,

which

which this Commandment obliges them to pay; and what are the Terms of this mutual Obligation, Nature itself seems to determine. The State and Condition of young People requires that they should dress, converse and behave in such a manner, as to shine in all publick Assemblies, and distinguish themselves by an apparent Superiority of Figure, Dress, and Equipage, agreeable to the Superiority of their Birth, Fortune, or Expectation: On the other hand, the State and Condition of Parents, *i. e.* of *Old Men and Old Women*, require nothing but the mere wholesome and cleanly Necessaries of Life; That they, who are or ought to be of course excluded from the gay Meetings and polite Assemblies of the Fair, the Witty, and the Young, where they only serve to spoil Sport, to damp the Mirth, and lay a Restraint upon the Frolics of the good Company, have really no Occasion for any thing, but warm Cloathing, and comfortable nourishing Food, Soups, Broths, and Jellies, good Fires, warm

Beds, and a few religious Books ; Nature itself dictates that they should betimes resign to the Heirs of their Bodies those Superfluities of Fortune, which they neither want, nor know how to enjoy with Relish or Decency.

BE it therefore enacted—, That if any Father or Mother are blessed with any Issue Male or Female, who are arrived at the proper Age of Desire and Discretion, warm Inclinations and good Understandings, who are too big to be corrected, and too wise to be taught ; that is to say, Sons that have attained to the full Age of seventeen or eighteen at the most, and Daughters to the Age of thirteen or fourteen at the most ; That the said Fathers and Mothers of such Children shall forthwith resign to the said Heirs of their Bodies, all that Superfluity of Fortune, which their said Heirs shall judge reasonable and convenient for themselves, and unnecessary and burdensome to

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their said Parents. Which reasonable Condition, if their said Parents shall refuse to comply with, they shall be taught by their said Children, who are reasonably presumed to be better Judges than themselves, the Absurdity and Injustice of such their Conduct and Behaviour toward their own Offspring, by that negligent and contemptuous Treatment as such Parents may be reasonably presumed to deserve from any sensible, polite, well-bred Children. But if any Parents shall be found so discreet and indulgent as freely and chearfully to resign all such unnecessary Superfluity of Estates, Jointures, Settlements, Pensions or Payments whatsoever, for the Behoof and Benefit of their said hopeful Progeny, that they shall from thenceforth be entitled to all that Honour, Respect and Esteem, which they may be justly and reasonably presumed to deserve, according to the full Intent and Meaning of this Commandment.

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THE Sixth Commandment, tho' capable of a very sober and rational Meaning, has been, like the rest, miserably perverted by a Set of cowardly, low-spirited, superstitious Expositors, who make it criminal even in Men of Spirit and Quality to do Justice to themselves and their Characters, by punishing the ill Manners of any little dirty Pot-tron that shall presume to affront them, by running him thro' the Body, beating out his Brains, or any other such Ways and Means as have in all Ages been thought reasonable and reputable, to secure the Regard due to their Rank and Fortune, and chastise the Infidelity of their Inferiors. Whereas it is generally presumed, that this **Commandment** was only intended to teach the lower and uneducated Part of Mankind to be quiet and peaceable in their Behaviour, not to be quarrelsome in their Cups, not to offer any outragious Acts of Violence to the disturbance of their Betters in any po-

the Assembly, where the Little Vulgar are too apt to mingle with the Great; as at Horse-Races, Bull-baitings, Country Fairs, Wakes, Feasts, and Revels, by killing or murdering one another in a rude, clumsy, passionate, butcherly Way —.

BE it therefore enacted, That if any Person below the Degree of a Gent. bearing Coat-Armour for three Descents, of which undoubted Proof shall be produced out of the Herald's Office, under the Seal and Sign Manual of King at Arms, shall presume to kill or demolish any of his Fellow-Subjects upon any sort or kind of Provocation whatsoever, it shall be deemed a Violation of this Commandment, and he shall be esteemed guilty of *Murder*. But if any Nobleman or Gentleman, qualify'd as above directed, shall exercise the same Act of Violence upon any Equal or Inferior, upon any just and reasonable Provocation, of which he himself shall be the proper Judge, it shall be

be considered only as *Man-slaughter*, and that it be an Instruction to all Coroners, to give it in charge to their several Inquests to bring in their Verdicts accordingly.—With a saving Clause in favour of all Officers of the Army, who being by their Profession Gentlemen of Blood, shall not be obliged to produce such Certificates from the Heralds-Office as are above mentioned and required; but that a Regimental Coat, and a laced Hat and Cockade, shall be to all Intents and Purposes equivalent to such Certificates and Testimonials requir'd to be produced by others. Always provided, that this Clause in favour of the Military Gentlemen shall by no means be extended to the Officers of the Militia; who being a kind of *mixtæ Personæ*, half civil and half military, are not obliged to look fierce, or appear terrible to their peaceable Neighbours, but upon the Field of Muster, or on a Day of Engagement in *Tothillfields*, or any adjacent Plain or Field of Battle, or upon being interrupted

terrupted in their March thro' the narrow Streets and Lanes of this City by sawcy Draymen, Hackney-Coachmen, or such like Impediments; if on the Overflowings of their martial Fury on such Provocations, they shall take it in their heads to kill either Man or Beast, they shall, so soon as they are divested of their Regimental Terrors and Accoutrements, and settled in their civil State of Trade and Tranquillity, be liable to the same Sentence of Guilt and Punishment as any other of their civil and peaceable Fellow-Subjects:

THE *Seventh Commandment*, like the rest, could be only intended to secure and promote the Good of the Publick, by preserving the Order of Society, and discouraging Luxury and Idleness among the lower Part of the People, who alone need or require such Restraints to be laid upon them, as not having Sense, Taste or Politeness enough to direct and govern themselves.

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Should such People as these give themselves up to Intrigues and Gallantries, the necessary Expence, Application and Address that such Affairs require, would have as fatal an Influence upon the Welfare of the Nation, as suffering unqualify'd Persons to poach and destroy the Game, which ought to be preserved for the Pleasure and Diversion of their Betters. It would tend to impoverish the industrious and laborious Part of their People, by diverting them from their proper Employments, would be greatly detrimental to our Trade and Manufacture, ruin many Families, and increase the Number of our Poor, so as to be an insupportable Burden to the Landed Interest of this Nation. But this ought by no means to be extended to People of Figure and Fortune, whose exuberancy of Blood and Riches may require such Expedients to reduce them to a sober degree of Mediocrity and Coolness; much less can it be supposed to affect our Governours and Superiours in Church or State,

State, who by the nature of their several Offices are presumed to be the proper Judges of their own or their Peoples Neces-sities, and are obliged to provide for both.

BE it therefore enacted, &c. That if from and after the day of next ensuing, any Labourer, Servant, Arti-ficer or Tradesman, or any Person under the degree of a Gentleman qualified as a-bove directed, shall wantonly and unadvisedly so far neglect the proper Business of his Pro-fession, and the Care of his Family, as to enter into any Intrigues or Familiarities with any other Women than Law and Custom shall allow ; that is to say, any married Man with any Woman, except his own lawful Wife, or any unmarried Man, with the lawful Wife of any other Man ; he shall be deemed guilty of the Breach of this *Com-mandment*. But it is hereby declared, that this *Commandment* does by no means extend to People of Fortune, Rank and Quality,

who may condescend so low as to bestow the Redundancy of their Blood and Fortune to the ennobling the Breed, relieving the Necessities, and raising the Fortune of a clever, deserving, Plebeian Family, or the giving and receiving mutual Marks of warm Benevolence and Affection to their Equals or Superiors; especially if by such Engraftment or Inoculation the Breed should happen to be mended, and a booby Family, that have been Blockheads ever since the Conquest, should visibly and apparently improve into a Race of Wits, Smarts, and clever Fellows: but more especially if masters can be so managed, that the Husband can, upon a valuable Consideration, be brought to consent to this Method of improving the Genius and Fortune of his Family, it being a Maxim of Law and Common Sense, that *Volenti non fit injuria.*

THE *Eighth Commandment* appears plainly, by the very Letter of it, -to be intended
purely

purely to discourage those mean, pitiful, sniveling Rogues, that in a secret cowardly way cheat and defraud their Neighbours, such as Robbers of Hen-roosts and Orchards, Sheepstealers, Horsestealers, Shoplifters and Pickpockets ; but can by no means be supposed to affect the open, generous, undisguised Methods, by which Men of Genius and Penetration increase their Fortunes, and support their Rank and Figure in the World ; it could never be intended Men of Parts and Industry, who are the great Supports of Civil Society ; it could never be supposed to condemn the improving those Advantages which Men of superior Abilities in the several States and Professions of Life have always thought themselves entitled to from the lazy, indolent, undiscerning, booby part of Mankind, who want Talents to preserve or enjoy those Superfluities of Fortune, which Men of superior Genius want and deserve. Much less can it be supposed to affect those who have the good

goed fortune to be the Directors and Goyernours of great Families, Provinces or Kingdoms, who have an undoubted Right to all such Emoluments, Profits, and Advantages which they shall think fit and reasonable to reward the Labour, Attention, and Time, which they are forced to employ in the discharge of their several Offices and Employments for the good of the Publick.

BE it therefore enacted, &c. That if from and after the day of next ensuing, any little pitiful Rogue shall be found filching, stealing, or feloniously purloining any Sum or Sums of Money, any Piece or Parcel of Goods, either dead or alive, belonging to any other Person, whether Apples, Pears, Eggs, Poultry, Meat, Drink, or Wearing Apparel, Linnen or Woollen Cloth, Sheep, Horses, or Oxen, Fans, Gloves, Ribbons or Pins, or any Piece or Parcel of Goods whatsoever, not exceeding

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ing the value of ten Pounds : Every such little Rascal so detected shall be deemed guilty of the Breach of this Commandment. But it is at the same time expressly provided and declar'd, That this shall not be construed to extend to People of higher Stations of Life, nor to those greater Articles of Loss or Gain which may chance to be in dispute between them, especially to the several Ranks and Degrees of illustrious Persons commonly called and known in all polite Assemblies by the honourable Title of *The Knights of the Industry*. Nor shall it extend to those whose superiour Skill in the Mysteries of the Law, Trade, Commerce, or *Change-Alley*, shall enable them to raise Estates out of the Follies and Superfluities of their Clients, Dealers, Friends or Correspondents, because they are thereby serving and promoting the Good of Society, by transferring a Property in Lands, Goods or Chattels from the lazy, stupid, worthless part of Mankind, who know not how to use, preserve and enjoy them,

them; and making them circulate for some time, till at last they settle in the Possession of some notable clever Fellow; whose Post-erity may come to be the Ornaments and Supports of their Country! Much less ought it to extend to those, who having the secret Management and Direction of any Great Family, Company, Society, Assemby, Post, Office or Offices, within these Realms, shall secure to themselves such Emoluments, Salaries, Grants, Pensions, Profits and Advantages; as have been always deemed the just and reasonable Perquisites of their several Posts and Offices, and which the sensible and judicious Part of Mankind, who have been in the secret of their Affairs, can scarce think to be a proper and sufficient Reward for all the Labour, the Vigilance, the Attention, the Application and Integrity they have exerted in the Course of a long Administration.

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THE Ninth Commandment seems upon a general View to be a very just and reasonable Injunction, for securing the Credit, Reputation, Peace, and Welfare of private Persons, Families, and Societies, by disou-raging and forbidding all false Evidence, malicious Lyes, abusive Stories, and injuri-ous Fictions, that may tend to the Obstruc-tion of Justice, the Prejudice of any Man's Fortune, the Ruin of his Credit, and the Loss of his Character; but it is thought reasonable and adviseable to qualify this ge-neral Prohibition by three Salvo's or Excep-tions in favour of publick Ministers, Courts of Justice, and Tea-Tables.

BE it therefore enacted, That from and after the day of next en-
suing, no Person or Persons shall presume to bear false Witness, or give false Evidence before any of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace, either in their Petty or Quarter-

H Sessions,

Sessions, in any Cause or Matter whatsoever, to the Obstruction or Delay of Justice, to the Prejudice of any Party to the several Suits that may from time to time be brought before them. Nor shall it be lawful for any Person or Persons to contrive, utter or publish malicious Lyes, officious Falshoods, or unjust Reflections, upon any Person or Persons, to the Prejudice of their Credit, the Loss of their Characters, the Grief and Disquiet of their Minds, or any other kind or degree of Loss or Suffering whatsoever, saving and excepting such Persons and Cases as are herein after excepted. That is to say,

I, THAT this Command shall not be deemed to extend to Court-Favourites, Royal Minions, First Ministers, Secretaries of State, Privy-Counsellors, Decypherers, Spies, Pimps, and Informers, nor to their several Officers, Servants and Domesticks, who by their Places and Stations may reasonably be presumed to be in the Interest and Secrets
of

of their respective Masters and Superiours ; who could not duly discharge the Duties of their several Stations, if they were to be confined to the strictest Rules of Truth and Sincerity : On the other hand, it appears that political Falshoods have in all Ages been found to be of singular Use and Benefit to Kings and Princes as well as to their Countrys and Subjects ; such as the disgracing and removing corrupt Ministers, and getting the Administration into cleaner hands, keeping out of the Royal Presence and Favour such Persons as would certainly make a corrupt use of it ; the supplanting Rivals and Competitors for Posts of Honour and Trust about their Royal Master ; the attainting and demolishing a dangerous over-grown Subject, in order to prevent his doing mischief, and getting his great Estates and Riches divided amongst a Number of honest Gentlemen, who spend their whole Time, and exert all their Faculties, in the Service of their King and Country. Now as all these

Fictions, Inventions and Falshoods were entirely calculated for the Benefit and Good of Society, they have not the Form and Essence of Lying; but are to be considered under the Notions of Feints and Stratagems in War: *Dolus an virtus quis in hoste requirit?* Lastly, it appears plainly from History, that they have more than once been of excellent Use in promoting and procuring the unspeakable Blessing of glorious and happy Revolutions in many Kingdoms and Countries, besides many other excellent and useful Purposes, too long and too many to be particularly enumerated.

But T has wished to affect a qualification
but 2. THAT this shall not extend to any of his Majesty's Courts in *Westminster-Hall*, where an Evidence literally and materially false, may yet be intentionally and formally good, and answer all the Uses and Purposes of Justice, Truth and Charity, by determining and finishing a tedious, expensive Suit, that would otherwise infallibly terminate.

nate in the Ruin of both Parties ; and notwithstanding all Appearance of Injustice and Cruelty, may be in its Consequences as great an Act of Mercy as giving a *Coup de grace* to a dying Malefactor, which shortens his Agonies, and at once puts him out of his Pain.

3. THIS shall not be extended in its extreme Rigour to those little polite Assemblies called *Tea-Tables* ; because if they were strictly confined to the Words of Truth and Soborness, and forbid those little Flights, Excursions and Deviations from Truth, which generally enliven and brighten the Audience, the Conversation would quickly grow flat and insipid, and the prettiest Orators in the Circle would be insensibly deprived of the Benefit and Freedom of Speech. And as it is universally known and acknowledged, that the *Dear Angels* have no Gall nor Malice at heart, no Spleen, Jealousies, Emulations, Competitions or Envy against

against the rest of their Sex, but only utter the Overflowings of their good Sense, good Nature, and Zeal for Virtue ; therefore if any very pretty Creature should, whilst she is cooling her Dish; or doubling her Bread and Butter, let fall any Word or Expression that has the appearance of Invective or Satyr, any Fling, Flirt, Hint or Innuendo that may seem to expose or ridicule the Shape, Air, Mien, Complexion, Drefs, good Sense or Conduct of any of her pretty Fellow-Creatures, in all such cases they must and ought and shall be indulged in such innocent Liberties, which are apparently intended only to divert and instruct the Company; and display their own good Taste, Wit and Eloquence, in opposition to the false Taste, the ill Manners, the Follies and Vices of the rest of their Sex.

THE Tenth Commandment appears to be quite unreasonable, if not absolutely impracticable, being a direct “ Contradiction

" to the great and fundamental Article of
 " natural Religion, which is TO FOL-
 " LOW NATURE, i.e. those Incli-
 " nations, Propensions and Desires, which
 " the Author of our Nature has implanted
 " in us, in order to determine our Con-
 " duct and Behaviour ; for to be sure he
 " would never have planted those Inclina-
 " tions in us, if he had not designed we
 " should gratify them ; it being utterly in-
 " consistent with his Wisdom and Good-
 " ness to give us Appetites and Desires, for
 " no other End but that we should check
 " and restrain them.*" Now let us put
 the case that a Man has no Wife of his own,
 and can find no agreeable Female that he
 could like to make his Companion for Life,
 or suppose him to be already yoaked to a
 sour, disagreeable, ill-natur'd Creature, that
 has extinguish'd the very Sparks of conjugal
 Affection : and that he sees his Friend or

* Principles of Deism set in a true Light, Page 44.

His Neighbour happy in the Enjoyment of a beautiful, tender, sensible, good-natur'd Spouse, is it not natural for such a Person to wish at least that he could make an Exchange, or share in the Happiness of his Neighbour? Is it not natural for him to wish himself in his Neighbour's Condition? Is any thing more common or more natural than to hear People wishing they had such a charming Woman, such a fine House, such a pretty Estate, such a beautiful Horse or Set of Horses, Plate or China, *so that nobody were the worse for it.* This is a righteous saving Clause, and takes away all the Iniquity and Injustice that can be supposed in the Act of coveting or desiring any kind or manner of thing, that is the Possession or Property of another. No manner of Question can be made, that if I like any other Man's Estate, House, Goods or Chattels, and he consent to part with them for a valuable Consideration, it is consistent with the most rigid Notions of commutative Justice,

suing, no Person or Persons, of what Rank, Quality or Degree soever, shall presume to attempt, by Fraud or Violence, to take, hold or enjoy any Man's Wife, House, Servants, Cattle, or any manner or kind of Property whatsoever, unless by mutual Contract, Agreement, Bargain or Sale, the Use or Property of the said valuable Goods, Chattels, Estates or Commodities be fairly transferr'd from the one to the other ; and that upon such Contract, fairly and legally made and executed, a Man shall be deemed to have the same Right and Title to the Use, Occupation, Enjoyment or Possession of the said valuable Goods, Estates and Commodities as the former Owner or Possessor was ever conceived to have, or could possibly convey to another.

AND for the better and more effectual Publication and Observance of the several Articles and Matters enjoined and commanded by this Act, it is hereby further provided

and

and enacted, That from and after the day of next ensuing, This Act shall be considered and regarded as a legal and Parliamentary Exposition of the said Ten Commandments, and that all Parsons Vicars and Curates, in their Expositions of the Church Catechism, commonly so called, do on every such Occasion make the aforesaid Declaration with a distinct and audible Voice, repeating the same three several times. And forasmuch as People of Rank and Figure, who by the Indulgence of this Act are excused from attending the Service of the Church, may possibly through Forgetfulness or Prejudices of Education, relapse into the old Superstition, it is further provided that it be an Instruction to the several Clerks of the Peace in every County in *Great Britain*, that this Act be read by the Cryer of the Court at every Quarter-Sessions, that all Gentlemen there present may be duly apprized of the many Privileges and

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**Exemptions to which they are entitled by
the Benefit of this Act.**

**AND for the further Security and Enforce-
ment of the several Articles and Matters con-
tained in this Act, it is further provided and
enjoined, That from and after the Day
and Month abovesaid no Printer, Publisher,
Bookseller, Pamphletseller, Hawker or Ped-
ler, or any other Person or Persons whatso-
ever, shall presume to print, publish, vend,
sell, or set to sale any Edition of the said
Ten Commandments, in any Volume, Form,
Shape, or Manner whatsoever, without ha-
ving this Act printed, and bound up toge-
ther with them, under the Penalty of five
Pound for every such Offence.**

YOU see, Sir, by this rough Draught, the
Nature and Design of this Proposal, in
which, if our Representatives shall discover
nothing, but what is highly reasonable and
expedient

expedient for the Welfare of the Publick,
I cannot but hope for their favourable At-
tention; and I cannot doubt, but that
there will be found proper Persons enough,
who shall be both willing and able to pre-
pare and bring in the said Bill.

I am,

S I R,

Your Faithful

Humble Servant.

F I N I S.

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the 20th of May 1791
in the year of our Lord 1791
I have sold to Mr. John
Hancock Esq; of Boston
Massachusetts a quantity
of old iron which I have
been collecting for many
years and which I have
now sold to him for £1000
sterling.



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John T. H. 1791

John T. H. 1791

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